

## **A Critical Appreciation to Thomas Groome's Shared Praxis Approach**

Sutrisna Harjanto

### **Abstract**

Thomas Groome's shared Christian praxis approach is the fruit of a genius effort to draw theological, philosophical, and pedagogical insights from various, sometimes opposite, resources, and blend them together to provide a rich approach in Christian religious education. His approach can be understood better by exploring the theological and the philosophical frameworks behind it, and also the historical background that influences Groome, which shaped his thoughts and to which he reacted.

Among the significant contributions of this approach are an enriched epistemology for Christian religious education and a balance/holistic approach between theory and praxis, and between Christian Story/Vision and participant's stories/vision. There are, however, some points that need to be critically challenged in order to make this approach more fruitful, such as his overemphasis of freedom as the purpose of Christian religious education and the absence of a clearer boundary markers between the constitutive and non-constitutive elements of the Christian Story/Vision in this approach.

Keywords: Thomas Groome, shared praxis, religious education, Christian education, dialectical hermeneutic, freedom, emancipative

### **Abstrak**

Pendekatan shared praxis dari Thomas Groome adalah buah dari upaya yg cerdas untuk menarik pemahaman-pemahaman teologis, filosofis, dan pedagogis dari berbagai sumber, yang kadang-kadang saling bertentangan, dan meramunya sedemikian rupa sehingga menghasilkan suatu pendekatan yang kaya dalam pendidikan agama Kristen. Pendekatan ini akan dapat dipahami lebih baik dengan menelusuri kerangka teologis dan filosofis di baliknya, berikut latar

belakang historis yang membentuk pemikiran-pemikiran Groome maupun yang kepadanya ia bereaksi.

Kontribusi yang signifikan dari pendekatan ini di antaranya adalah epistemologi yang diperkaya untuk pendidikan agama Kristen dan pendekatan yang seimbang/utuh antara teori dan praxis, dan antara Kisah/Visi Kristen dengan kisah/visi peserta didik. Namun ada beberapa hal yang perlu dikritisi agar pendekatan ini bisa lebih berbuah, di antaranya adalah penekanan yang berlebihan terhadap kebebasan sebagai tujuan pendidikan agama Kristen dan ketiadaan batasan-batasan yang jelas antara unsur-unsur Kisah/Visi Kristen yang mendasar dan yang tidak dalam pendekatan ini.

Kata-Kata Kunci: Thomas Groome, berbagi praxis, pendidikan agama Kristen, pendidikan kristen, hermeneutik dialektis, kebebasan, membebaskan

### Introduction

Toward the end of the twentieth century Thomas Groome's shared praxis approach was widely recognized in the field of religious education, both in Roman Catholic and in Protestant contexts. This new approach was introduced in his outstanding work, *Christian Religious Education: Sharing Our Story and Vision* (1980), which D. Campbell Wykoff calls the "only comparable book in the field" to George Albert's Coe's *A Social Theory of Religious Education*.<sup>1</sup> The shared praxis approach was further elaborated on in his second work, *Sharing Faith: A Comprehensive Approach to Religious Education and Pastoral Ministry: The Way of Shared Praxis* (1991), and renamed "Life to Faith to Life" approach in his more recent work *Will There be Faith?: A New Vision for Educating and Growing Disciples* (2011).<sup>2</sup>

Various attempts have been made to apply the shared praxis approach beyond its original context in religious education in the Roman Catholic Church in the US.<sup>3</sup> Various analyses and mixed

---

<sup>1</sup> Miriam Charter, "Thomas H Groome's Shared Praxis Approach to Ministry: Questioning Its Application in the Protestant Evangelical Church," *Trinity Journal* 15, no. 1 (1994): 89–113.

<sup>2</sup> Groome (2012) calls *Sharing Faith* as "the most complete and scholarly statement of my approach to religious education, and indeed to all the functions of ministry" (20), while he says that *Will There be Faith?*, which was written for the common reader, "mature insights from all of the books and some 200 essays he wrote over the years" (22).

<sup>3</sup> The translation of Groome's *Christian religious Education* was published only recently in 2010 in Indonesia

responses to this approach have come from various theological perspectives, particularly at the peak of enthusiasm to this approach in the 1990s<sup>4</sup> and until recently<sup>5</sup>. Together with high appreciations and enthusiasm for this engaging approach also come questions and concerns about this experiential approach in religious education.<sup>6</sup>

In order to fairly evaluate the shared praxis approach and mine the treasures within it as it is applied to specific contexts, Groome's educational approach needs to be understood within its larger theological and philosophical framework and its historical context. Therefore, in this paper, the theological and philosophical framework underlying his theory will be scrutinized and the historical context that has shaped his theory will be explored. The goal is that this will provide a clearer picture of his theory and cultivate an informed appreciation and critique of his contribution to the field of Christian education. Toward this purpose, I will use Miriam Charter's analysis framework and some of her highlights of Groome's approach as a starting point for analysis.<sup>7</sup>

### Groome's Shared Praxis Approach

Groome describes the shared praxis approach in Christian religious education basically as "a group of Christians sharing in dialogue their critical reflection on present action in light of the

---

<sup>4</sup> For example, Mervyn Arthur Wagner, "Thomas Groome's Educational Thinking: An Evaluation from Lutheran Perspectives" (Concordia College, 1986); Robert Alan Brocius, "Thomas Groome's 'Shared Christian Praxis': An Alternative Paradigm for Southern Baptist Theological Education" (Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1991); Charter, "Thomas H Groome's Shared Praxis Approach to Ministry: Questioning Its Application in the Protestant Evangelical Church." *Trinity Journal* 15, no. 1 (Spring 1994): 89–113.

<sup>5</sup> For example, Tom Beaudoin, "The Theological Anthropology of Thomas Groome," *Religious Education* 100, no. 2 (Spr 2005): 127–38; Neville Clement, "Thomas Groome and the Intersection of Narrative and Action: Praxis, Dialectic and Hermeneutics," *Australian EJournal of Theology* 10 (2007); Jeff Astley and Lorna Bowman, "Will There Be Faith? Depends on Every Christian," *Journal of Adult Theological Education* 9, no. 1 (June 2012): 94–99.

<sup>6</sup> A fuller account of articles, book reviews, dissertations, and theses, building upon the works of Thomas Groome can be found in his online biography (by Horell) published recently at The "Christian Educators of the 20th Century Project" site. [http://www.talbot.edu/ce20/educators/catholic/thomas\\_groome/](http://www.talbot.edu/ce20/educators/catholic/thomas_groome/)

<sup>7</sup> Miriam Charter, "Thomas H Groome's Shared Praxis Approach to Ministry: Questioning Its Application in the Protestant Evangelical Church," *Trinity Journal* 15, no. 1 (1994): 89–113.

Christian Story and its Vision toward the end of lived Christian faith.”<sup>8</sup> In his later work, *Sharing Faith*, he details his description of this approach (also called “shared Christian praxis”) as “a participative and dialogical pedagogy in which people reflect critically on their own historical agency in time and place and on their sociocultural reality, have access together to Christian Story/Vision, and personally appropriate it in community with the creative intent of renewed praxis in Christian faith toward God’s reign for all creation.”<sup>9</sup>

Groome’s shared-praxis approach was originally presented as a theory in his dissertation, *Toward a Theory/ Method of Liberating Catechesis* (1975), within a strong Roman Catholic context of theology and catechesis. It was further developed as a more complete theory for a wider audience in *Christian Religious Education: Sharing Our Story and Vision* (1980). It addresses six fundamental questions of Christian religious education: its nature (the what), its purpose (the why), its context (the where), its approach (a how), readiness to this approach (the when), and the role of students and teachers (the who). The five movements, which are the main part in his shared-praxis approach, are elaborated further in *Sharing Faith: A Comprehensive Approach to Religious Education and Pastoral Ministry* (1991). There are also some developments and modification to his educational theory in this work, but the main thrust of the shared-praxis approach remained unchanged.

In Groome’s previous works the five movements are: 1) naming present action; 2) critical reflection on present action; 3) making accessible Christian Story and Vision; 4) dialectical hermeneutic between the Story and participant’s stories; and 5) dialectical hermeneutic between the Vision and participant’s visions.<sup>10</sup> In *Sharing Faith*, maintained until recently in *Will There be Faith?*, the fourth movement is changed to dialectical hermeneutic to appropriate Story/Vision to participant’s stories and visions, and the fifth to decision/response for lived Christian faith.<sup>11</sup> With these changes, Groome wants to emphasize that the end goal of religious education

---

<sup>8</sup> Thomas H. Groome, *Christian Religious Education: Sharing Our Story and Vision* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1980), 184.

<sup>9</sup> Thomas H. Groome, *Sharing Faith: A Comprehensive Approach to Religious Education and Pastoral Ministry: The Way of Shared Praxis* (San Francisco: Harper, 1991), 135.

<sup>10</sup> Thomas H. Groome, “Toward a Theory/Method of Liberating Catechesis” (Columbia University, 1975); Groome, *Christian Religious Education*.

<sup>11</sup> Groome, *Sharing Faith*; Thomas Groome, *Will There Be Faith?: A New Vision for Educating and Growing Disciples* (New York, NY: HarperOne, 2011).

is not accumulation of knowledge, but a lived Christian faith. The process begins with praxis, and end with praxis.

The five movements of the Shared Christian Praxis as presented in *Sharing Faith* or Life to Faith to Life<sup>12</sup> in *Will There be Faith?* are:<sup>13</sup>

### **First Movement: Naming/Expressing Present Action**

At the outset, participants are invited to explore and name their own activity related to a particular focus (the “generative theme”). The action includes what the participants do physically, emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually, whether in the personal or social context. The goal of this movement is to start the learning process with drawing out a personal statement on present action, rather than with a detached and abstract statement of *theoria*.

### **Second Movement: Critical Reflection on Present Action**

At this step, participants are invited to reflect on the particular action they named in the previous step in order to explore the reason of why they do it and their hopes in doing it. This step is meant to help participants bring to their consciousness the social conditioning, norms, and assumptions underneath their actions. This movement also includes the use of imagination to explore their expectations for their actions (the vision).

### **Third Movement: Making Accessible Christian Story and Vision**

This movement is the most didactic movement, in which the educator presents to the participants the Story of the faith community concerning the topic at hand and the Vision or response it invites. Groome defines the Story as a metaphor for “the faith tradition handed on to Christians and the contemporary understanding, celebrating, and living of it in their faith community,”<sup>14</sup> and Vision is defined as “a metaphor for the possibilities and responsibilities, the

---

<sup>12</sup> Groome explains that after over thirty-five years of using the term “shared Christian praxis” he realized, “That is still a good name for it, but takes a lot of explaining” (2011, 261).

<sup>13</sup> Groome, *Sharing Faith*, 155–293; Groome, *Will There Be Faith?*, 199–232.

<sup>14</sup> Groome, *Sharing Faith*, 113.

promises and demands, that are prompted by the Christian community's Story."<sup>15</sup>

In order to encourage a personal appropriation by the participants, in dialogue with their own experiences, Groome insists that the Story and Vision are made available in a dialogical manner and are not absolutized.<sup>16</sup> In order to fulfill this task well, educators are encouraged to be well-prepared for their hermeneutical tasks, including the pre-understanding that they bring; the need of hermeneutics of retrieval, suspicion, and creative commitment; and authentic explanation of the Christian Story and Vision.

#### **Fourth Movement: Dialectical Hermeneutics to Appropriate Story/Vision to Participant's Stories and Visions**

At this step, participants are invited to place their own stories/visions related to the generative theme (in the first and second movement) in dialectical hermeneutic with Christian Story/Vision (in the third movement). The two-way hermeneutical questions to be asked are: "How does Story/Vision affirm, question, and call us beyond present praxis? And, conversely, How does present praxis affirm and critically appropriate the version of Story/Vision made accessible in movement 3[?]" And from this, "how are we to live more faithfully toward the vision of God's reign?"<sup>17</sup>

#### **Fifth Movement: Decision/Response for Lived Christian Faith**

This final movement is an invitation to participants to make their personal decisions on future actions in response to the critical reflection and dialectical hermeneutics in the previous movements. The responses might be primarily cognitive, affective, or behavioral in the personal, relational, or social context. Hence, the process starts with a reflection on present action and ends with a decision for future action to live Christian faith in the world more faithfully in consideration of the Christian Story and the Vision of God's reign.

---

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 115.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 215.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 249.

### Groome's Theological and Philosophical Framework

In order to understand the theological and philosophical framework of Groome's shared-praxis approach, exploring his work's three key concepts is crucial. Throughout his works, these concepts are expressed repeatedly through three set of keywords: 1) freedom/emancipation/liberation, 2) praxis, and 3) dialectical hermeneutic.

#### Freedom/Emancipation/Liberation

Following the broad spectrum of critical contemporary theology, Groome affirms the centrality of the Kingdom of God to Christian faith.<sup>18</sup> This kingdom is God's reign on earth that has its own tensions: between the "already" (it has been inaugurated in Jesus Christ's ministry in the past) and the "not yet" (it will be perfected only in Christ return in the future), and also between a "gift" (that comes by God's grace and power through Christ's death and resurrection) and an "invitation" (for God's people to participate through an obedient response).

Groome suggests three pastoral implications for this concept: personal, ecclesial, and social. Personal conversion is necessary to respond to the invitation to accept Jesus Christ as one's Lord and Savior, since the Kingdom must begin in the hearts of its citizens. This conversion is also to be understood as a constant calling to turn toward God by turning toward one's neighbor. As a faith community, the Church is called to manifest the Kingdom in a threefold mission: *kerygma* (to preach and celebrate the message and memory of the risen Christ), *koinonia* (to become a community of authentic fellowship, faith, hope, and love), and *diakonia* (to serve the whole human family). The social implications of the Kingdom for individual Christians and Christian communities are to promote justice, peace, and freedom in social, political, economic, and cultural structures.

Recognizing the centrality of the theme of the Kingdom of God, Groome asserts that it should become the ultimate purpose for Christian religious education. "When an educational activity is intended to sponsor people toward Christian faith, the overarching purpose (the ultimate, or *metapurpose*) of such education is the Kingdom of God in Jesus Christ."<sup>19</sup> However, Groome also qualifies

---

<sup>18</sup> Groome, *Christian Religious Education*, 43–50.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 49.

this further by explaining that there are twin immediate purposes within the ultimate purpose of the kingdom of God, namely Christian faith and human freedom. The relationship between the two “is symbiotic, in that, if they exist at all, they exist together, and each one draws from and gives life to the other”, and that “Christian faith is grounded in human freedom, and the fruit of it is to live with, in, and for freedom, both here and hereafter.”<sup>20</sup>

The centrality of freedom in Groome’s theological thoughts is identifiable since very early in his dissertation. He argues that “... our epoch has its peculiar task too—the task of bringing the possibility of freedom to realization. To say that it is particularly the task of our era is simply to say that human consciousness has finally come to the point where we perceive this as the singularly critical task of our time.”<sup>21</sup> For Groome, the essence of Christianity is “a call to freedom,”<sup>22</sup> and his reading of the Scripture leads to the conclusion that “a central thrust of the Gospel message is to present Christ as a liberator of people from their sins.”<sup>23</sup>

Groome perceives Gutierrez’ liberation theology, developed in the same Roman Catholic context, as a helpful model to articulate his theological position in this issue. Following Gutierrez, he emphasizes that salvation in Christ is to begin in the present historical context, not only in the spiritual realm or in the life after death. This salvation is synonymous with liberation, a single salvific process in three levels: 1) “economic, social, and political liberation”; 2) “liberation, which leads to the creation of a new man in a new society of solidarity”; and 3) “liberation from sin and entrance into communion with God and with all men.” In this line of thought, sin is understood as a social historical fact, “expressed and maintained by the oppressive structures of society that make a true entering into communion with God and with others impossible. Thus, to be freed from sin demands freedom from those oppressive structures.”<sup>24</sup>

Recognizing that Christ is the source of salvation (liberation) and that this salvation is a free gift from God, Groome, in agreement with Gutierrez, also stresses that its realization is worked out in the historical praxis of human history. Therefore, he argues that the church must become the Sacrament of Liberation. This implies several responsibilities: 1) to expose and denounce all forms of oppression in society; 2) to enable people to be aware of their oppression; 3) to live

---

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 82.

<sup>21</sup> 6/13/17 4:19:00 AM

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 75.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 83.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 84.

a real poverty in solidarity with the poor; 4) to reform its own internal structure to be able to fulfill the first three functions with credibility; and 5) to use all of its structures and ministry to support movements seeking authentic liberation.<sup>25</sup>

Given this theological conviction, emancipation/freedom becomes the main motif in Groome's educational approach. He argues that to be consistent with the ultimate emancipative purpose, our educational process in religious education must be free from any form of coercion (indoctrination and manipulation) and promote human emancipation. "The pedagogical question is –how can the Christ event be made present to people in such a way that it is a saving, liberating experience..."<sup>26</sup>

At the same time, the motif of emancipation/freedom can also be seen in the way Groome outlines the purpose of Christian religious education. He suggests human freedom, together with Christian faith (believing, trusting, and doing), as twin immediate purposes within the ultimate purpose of leading people toward the kingdom of God in Jesus Christ. Human freedom in Groome's framework is multidimensional: spiritual, personal, and social/political dimensions,<sup>27</sup> modified in his later work to personal, interpersonal, and sociopolitical dimensions.<sup>28</sup>

## Praxis

After explaining the philosophical roots of praxis all the way through from Aristotle, Hegel, Marx, and Habermas, Groome admits, "My first attempts to use a praxis approach in religious education began after meeting Freire and reading his foundational work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, in 1972."<sup>29</sup> The praxis way of knowing for Christian religious education involves a critical reflection on lived experience, within a community context. Groome defines praxis as "twin moments of the same activity that are united dialectically."<sup>30</sup> These twin moments are action and reflection. Groome argues that he chooses praxis epistemology / way of knowing for Christian religious education for its capability to promote a "knowing" in the biblical sense, to maintain a unity between "theory" and praxis, and its

---

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 89–90.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 122.

<sup>27</sup> Groome, *Christian Religious Education*, 96.

<sup>28</sup> Groome, *Sharing Faith*, 24.

<sup>29</sup> Groome, *Christian Religious Education*, 175.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 152.

capability to promote emancipation and human freedom.<sup>31</sup> This approach is in contrast to the traditional epistemology commonly used in the Western churches. The latter is based on “*theoria*” that he perceives as oppressive and tends to maintain a dichotomy between theory and practice. He stresses that with the old approach “theology can be done in the abstract, apart from action, in such a way to have little consequence for the living of life.”<sup>32</sup>

To support his argument for the praxis approach he explores some key biblical words in the Old Testament (Hebr. *yada*) and the New Testament (such as Gk. *ginoskein*). He insists in a biblical understanding “people come to know the Lord in the midst of historical experience, by reflecting on the activity of God there, by entering a relationship with God and God’s people, and by their lived response to that relationship.” Therefore, he maintains, “Christian religious education should be grounded in a relational/experiential/reflective way of knowing.”<sup>33</sup>

In starting the learning process with the present experience of the participants, we can find a strong expression of Groome’s intention to promote an emancipative learning process. Rather than starting with a propositional doctrinal statement or a biblical passage as the absolute objective truth to be understood and embraced, he begins with the experiences of the participants. To understand Groome’s line of thought in this approach it is helpful to look at Dewey’s assumptions in his experiential way of learning, from which Groome developed his educational idea of religious education. Some assumptions are: First, knowledge is rooted in experience. People have no way of knowing things (truth or reality) beyond human experience. Second, there are no a priori concepts and Absolute Truths. Humans know about matter only as they experience it and reflect upon those experiences with their minds. And third, with the passage of time, human concepts of reality changes, according to changes in humanity’s experiences (such as the understanding of the cosmic system: from geocentric, to heliocentric, and subsequently galaxies).<sup>34</sup>

Another influence for Groome’s emphasis on the present experience of the participants comes from Gabriel Moran’s concept of “the present revelation.”<sup>35</sup> In agreement with Moran, Groome argues

---

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 177.

<sup>32</sup> Groome, “Toward a Theory/Method of Liberating Catechesis,” 175.

<sup>33</sup> Groome, *Christian Religious Education*, 145.

<sup>34</sup> George R. Knight, *Philosophy & Education: An Introduction in Christian Perspective*, 4th ed. (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2006), 67–71.

<sup>35</sup> Gabriel Moran, *The Present Revelation: The Search for Religious Foundations*. (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972), 96.

that revelation is experienced through living as a Christian in the present. He maintains that theological articulation is done by reflecting on present events/activities in the light of the Word. He insists that this view is in line with the Decree on Revelation from the Second Vatican Council, that states God has always spoken to us through the events of human history, and he continues to “live among us” and “speak to us as friends.”

However, unlike Moran, whom he criticizes as putting too much emphasis on the present and neglecting or discrediting God’s dealing with God’s people in the past, Groome insists that this present experience should be critiqued in the memory of God’s revelation in the past. “Such a concept of revelation—present experience in the memory of past experiences—points to a doing of theology by praxis—a critical reflection on present action in the light of the Word.”<sup>36</sup> Thus, in his effort to promote an emancipative educational approach, Groome still tries to develop a “social control” mechanism to keep participants from developing a theological understanding merely based on their own limited personal experiences in the present.

### **Dialectical Hermeneutic**

As has been explained earlier, at the first half of the dialectical hermeneutic movement of the shared-praxis approach participants are invited to make Story and Vision of the larger Christian community the source of critique to affirm, question, and call them beyond their own stories and visions. This is very important to keep them from a blind subjectivity in the learning process. However, this is not the whole story. In the second half of the dialectical hermeneutic, the opposite direction from the present praxis to the Story and Vision is also encouraged. Participants “are to evaluate both the versions of Story/Vision as made accessible and the version of present praxis expressed in movements 1 and 2 by bringing these two ‘sources’ to ‘judge’ and be appropriated to each other.”<sup>37</sup> Groome explains his reasons for this:

In this part there are dimensions of our Story that are reclaimed as of value and lasting truth. But no one interpretation of our Story is ever its complete and final meaning. We can always return to it to find truths that were not recognized before

---

<sup>36</sup> Groome, “Toward a Theory/Method of Liberating Catechesis,” 97.

<sup>37</sup> Groome, *Sharing Faith*, 257.

because “the breadth and length and height and depth” (Eph 3:18) of it can never be totally known by us. In this sense every version of the Story is limited. In addition there are aspects of our Story we must refuse to inherit (to cite two obvious examples, dimensions of our tradition that have discriminated against women and legitimated slavery).<sup>38</sup>

Consistent with his experiential approach, this second part of the dialectical hermeneutic is another expression of Groome’s intention to promote an emancipative educational approach for religious education. However, the notion that our present praxis can affirm or challenge the Christian Story and Vision immediately leads to the question of whether Groome accepts the authority and finality of the Scripture as the canon (measure) to Christian faith.<sup>39</sup>

In response to this question, one may say that to be able to understand this statement more clearly, one needs to read Groome’s statement within his Roman Catholic context. In fact, Groome explains that the term “Story” refers to Scripture and Tradition, not exclusively to the Scripture as it would be understood in the Protestant context. Thus, this second part of the dialectical hermeneutic may not be a totally new idea in Roman Catholic context that accepts Scripture and Tradition at the same level of authority, and recognizes that God continually speaks throughout history. Within its Roman Catholic context this notion might legitimately mean that God’s revelation in the present can be incorporated to the accumulating Church tradition, as an affirmation, addition, or modification of the past. Therefore, based on this line of thought, his refusal to inherit certain aspects of the Christian Story, such as dimensions of tradition which discriminates against women and legitimated slavery, cannot be easily interpreted as his refusal against the authority and finality of the Scripture.

However, Groome goes further in his definition of “tradition”. In the Roman Catholic Church context, the Magisterium has the authority officially to declare what is part of the authoritative tradition. In the Shared Praxis approach, however, Groome describes the Christian Story as “a metaphor for the whole faith life and practical wisdom of the Christian community that is congealed in its Scriptures, symbols, myths, rituals, liturgies, creeds, dogmas, doctrines, theologies, practices, spiritualities, expected life-styles, values, arts, artifacts,

---

<sup>38</sup> Groome, *Christian Religious Education*, 196–97.

<sup>39</sup> F. F. Bruce, *The Canon of Scripture* (Downers Grove, Ill: IVP Academic, 1988).

structures, and so on.”<sup>40</sup> Therefore, this broad definition of the “Story” and his dialectical hermeneutic stir questions of whether with this approach Groome is trying to “fuse the horizon” not only between present and past experience, but also between what is ecclesially recognized as authoritative and not authoritative. It is not surprising that concerns related to this issue came from both Protestant<sup>41</sup> and Roman Catholic Church educators.<sup>42</sup>

### **The Historical Context that Influenced the Development of Groome’s Theory**

Groome in *Toward a Theory* explains several reasons why he chooses praxis approach: 1) Because it is emancipative-- this is related to his personal/family, social-political, and ecclesial background; 2) His conviction that the concept of revelation focuses on the present, within the dialectical relationship with the past story, is emancipative; 3) His conviction that the central thrust of the Gospel message is to present Christ as a liberator of people; and 4) The traditional way of doing theology that dichotomized theory and practice, Groome claims, does not provide sufficient foundation for the Church to properly engage the world.<sup>43</sup> It is obvious from his own explanation that Groome is aware of the influences of his own historical context in developing his shared praxis approach. This context can be understood as consisting of two elements: the issues or situations that he is responding to, and the issues and situations that have shaped him in his responses.

In this section, Groome’s historical context is explored based on this division.

---

<sup>40</sup> Groome, *Sharing Faith*, 114.

<sup>41</sup> Charter, “Thomas H Groome’s Shared Praxis Approach to Ministry.”

<sup>42</sup> This concern is also reflected in an online discussion among catechists addressing the criticism toward the Shared Praxis approach. “The key in all these questions of methodology is to make sure true Catholic teaching is passed on whole and unaltered... The criticism of Groome’s approach is that it doesn’t do this, or at the least, is not as conducive as other methods... The fact that Groome encourages critical reflection on the Revelation based on the current situation has the potential effect of watering down and changing the content of the message” (Marc Cardaronella, October 26, 2012, comment on Paprocki 2012. “Where have you gone, Thomas Groome? The role of experience in catechesis.”). Accessed April 1, 2016. <http://catechistsjourney.loyolapress.com/2012/10/where-have-you-gone-thomas-groome-the-role-of-experience-in-catechesis/>

<sup>43</sup> Groome, “Toward a Theory/Method of Liberating Catechesis,” 92–100.

### **The Situation that Groome Responded to**

Thomas Groome was born in 1945 in County Kildare, Ireland. He was the youngest son of a nationalistic family. His father played an active role in the nationalistic movement in the early twentieth century fighting for Irish freedom from centuries of English rule. The movement resulted in the establishment of a twenty-six county independent state in 1921, which became a republic in 1948. His father continued to be an active local politician for the rest of his life, who continued to talk about freedom, both psychologically as the newly independent nation and also politically for six counties that remained a part of the British.<sup>44</sup>

Therefore, even though in the late sixties Groome immigrated to the United States, his earlier background in Ireland left a deep impact in his life. The oppressive experience in his country of origin and the nationalistic spirit in his family caused him to deeply value freedom and dedicate himself to its advancement in the world. "Given a childhood with the songs I sang, the stories I heard, and my father's dinner table conversation as well as public speeches, it is easy to understand why I so value freedom."<sup>45</sup>

Another aspect of Groome's concern is the Church's silence in the face of oppression. He suspects this is caused by a dichotomic teaching that leads to the Church remaining detached from the world affairs, even after Vatican II. With this unwillingness to respond, the Church does not play her prophetic task and at times maintains the status quo of oppressive situation/forces. As a result, he observes that some of the most oppressive social conditions prevail in Catholic countries such as in Latin America, in which one-third of the Roman Catholic members live.

Groome's further concern is the oppressive situation within the Church. Three areas that reflect his concern are: 1) The domination of the clergy over lay people, and further the domination of the Magisterium over the clergy, in moral teaching and church administration; 2) The misuse of the sacrament as a means of power play, not as a means of grace. In this regard he raises two examples of cases of remarriage for lay people and the rule of celibacy for clergy in which the Church exercises her power in making her decision without

---

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 93.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 94.

opening dialogue for those controversial issues; and 3) The church refusal to ordain women as priests.<sup>46</sup>

Further reflection on the educational ministry of the Church (its catechesis) also indicates that the presupposition that the Church has the fullness of truth leads to “a form of educating that is monological and has greater possibility for domination and manipulation than it has for liberation.”<sup>47</sup> This approach to education, which Paulo Freire called “banking education”, is perceived as oppressive, dehumanizing, and does not empower the people to participate actively in the coming Kingdom.<sup>48 49</sup>

### The Situation that Shaped Groome’s Response

According to Groome, his shared-praxis approach is a reflection of his experience as a religious educator in a Roman Catholic setting and the praxis of certain religious educators he observed as informed by pedagogical, philosophical, theological, psychological, sociological literature, and research.

#### a) *Vatican II: A Fresh Wind of Openness*

Groome received his theological education and developed his works at the time when a major shift was going on in the Roman Catholic Church, from centuries of a very conservative view based on the decrees of the Council of Trent (1554-63) to a significant openness brought by the Second Vatican Council in 1962-1965. Even though, in some points, he moved beyond what is officially acceptable by the Roman Catholic Church, in many ways his theological position and

---

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 112–18.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 119.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 121.

<sup>49</sup> Perhaps it would be important to note that Groome’s criticism toward the Catholic Church shifts toward a much more favorable tone in his most recent work *Will There be Faith? (WTF)*, published over thirty years after his dissertation. In *WTF*, two Catholic Church references for catechesis are frequently referred to as authoritative documents: *Catechism of the Catholic Church* – CCC (1994) and *General Directory for Catechesis* – GDC (1997).

At the same time, the shift can also be seen in his explanation of the movements. For example, he frequently repeats the phrase “meaning and persuasion” in the presentation of the Christian Story and Vision. To a certain extent this could be related to a positive experience which Groome had with the Church during the three decades after the publication of his first book. This includes his well-accepted role as a curriculum developer in the Catholic religious education, particularly in the US (see Horell for more details on his role as a curriculum developer).

educational thoughts is a reflection of and supported by the winds of change in the church.

For centuries, the theology of the Roman Catholic Church was dominated by Thomas Aquinas' theology rooted in scholasticism. After the Council of Trent in the sixteenth century scholastic theology functioned: "(I) to define, present, and explain revealed truths; (II) to examine doctrine, to denounce and condemn false doctrines, and to defend true ones; (III) to teach revealed truths authoritatively."<sup>50</sup> With this static mindset, the theologian's task "was understood primarily as reflection on scripture and tradition to explain and apply them to life" in which the historical context of reflection is ignored as if it had no consequence to the doing of theology.<sup>51</sup>

A hope for an alternative freedom of expression in doing theology was initially found in the Tübingen School of Theology in the early part of the nineteenth century. However, it did not last long. By the middle of the nineteenth century the official Church moved back to the old way of doing theology, called as Neoscholasticism. Preceded by the emergence of the "new theologian" such as Le Grange, Congar, and Rahner three decades earlier, eventually the longed-for breakthrough came through the Second Vatican Council (1962-5).<sup>52</sup>

Groome argues that the basic stance of the "new theologians" on the development of dogma is reflected in paragraph eight of the final draft of the Constitution: "This tradition which comes from the Apostles develops in the Church with the help of the Holy Spirit... For as the centuries succeed one another, the Church constantly moves forward towards the fullness of divine truth until the words of God reach their complete fulfillment in her."<sup>53</sup> A significant indication of the shift in the Church is reflected in the final vote. The decree that allows historical development in understanding divine truth was accepted by a large majority in the Council.<sup>54</sup> The theological shift in Vatican II become the main foundation for Groome's theology, and his praxis approach is actually an effort to implement this new theological perspective into one of the most important parts of the church, catechesis, the basic religious education for the future leaders of the church.

---

<sup>50</sup> Groome, "Toward a Theory/Method of Liberating Catechesis," 10.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> T. M. Schoof, *A Survey of Catholic Theology, 1800-1970* (Glen Rock: NJ: Paulist Newman Press, 1970), 108.

<sup>53</sup> Groome, "Toward a Theory/Method of Liberating Catechesis," 15.

<sup>54</sup> Christopher Rowland, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Liberation Theology*, Cambridge Companions to Religion (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 5-6.

b) *Liberation Theology: a legitimate model in Catholic contexts*

The liberation motif in catholic theology existed before the Second Vatican Council. However, it was after this Council that this theme became widely known and more well-accepted. There is no unified or systematized theology among its adherents. However, Groome observes that they share five common general characteristics:

1. Each accepts an active ongoing attitude to life, to creation, and to revelation.
2. Each understands the doing of theology in the context of praxis...
3. These theologians posit an openness to the future and stress the openness of the future...
4. They see Christ's word and work as a liberation from sin, but they situate sin, and therefore the reality of redemption, within the social setting of present time and space.
5. Their critical reflection on present action is aimed at a critique of the present structure of society which inhibit redemption of communities and persons in their historical setting.<sup>55</sup>

Groome's praxis approach is influenced by this liberation motif. In fact, he claims explicitly that Gutierrez' liberation theology has become a helpful model for him in doing theology, to develop the basis for his shared praxis educational approach. His praxis approach is also influenced by Freire, another Catholic model who promotes emancipative education in a social context.

In *Christian Religious Education* Groome describes religious education as a political activity. This statement refers to an understanding that religious education is a deliberate and structured attempt to influence the way people live in the society. Groome argues that the heart of Christian spirituality is to love God by loving our neighbor. Therefore, Christian religious education "is being political, that is, intervening in people's lives to influence them in how they live out their temporality in social relationships."<sup>56</sup>

c) *Evolution of the Roman Catholic catechesis*

The traditional Roman Catholic catechesis method follows Luther's catechism format, with different content. Started as early as

---

<sup>55</sup> Groome, "Toward a Theory/Method of Liberating Catechesis," 18.

<sup>56</sup> Groome, *Christian Religious Education*, 26.

in 1555, gradually it became universal in the Roman Catholic Church. It is based on memorization of the Catholic doctrines. “The goal was to teach Doctrine by exact formulas on the assumptions that, later in life, their meaning and relevance would be understood.”<sup>57</sup>

There were some attempts at the creation of alternatives throughout centuries. The first significant change in the early nineteenth-hundreds marked by attempts to accommodate experience or example that interest children, such as games, song, plays, and projects. The next significant change by Josef Jungmann (Kerygmatic Movement) impacting the content. His contribution was to reestablish the Christ-centered proclamation replacing the overemphasis on the apologetic nature in the catechesis. His work was extended and brought to various countries by his fellow Austrian Johannes Hofinger. The movement was officially accepted by the International Catechetical Study Week in 1960. Boys highlights that “The Jungmann-Hofinger tradition functioned as a key element in pre-Vatican II renewal...”<sup>58</sup>

Another development that follows after the Kerygmatic movement leads to the emergence of the “pre-evangelization concern” which emphasizes the immanent anthropocentric situation within which the Word is to be announced. Eventually in another International Study Week at Medellin in 1968 the social and political implication of the Christian faith were highlighted as the priority.<sup>59</sup> “At Medellin there was insistence on the unity of salvation history and human history. This means that the present is an integral part of revelation. As a result, the catechetical process is to begin with present experience.”<sup>60</sup>

d) *Epistemological shifts in Christian religious education*

Groome argues that in general education the idea of learning by doing is not something new, but neglected for a long time. However, among leading educational theories in the West there has been a shift back toward a more active/reflective way of knowing, arising from lived experience. He argues that such epistemology is implicit in Comenius, Locke, Rousseau, Pestalozzi, and Froebel, but the experiential way of knowing is significantly explicit in Dewey’s educational theory.<sup>61</sup>

---

<sup>57</sup> Groome, “Toward a Theory/Method of Liberating Catechesis,” 21.

<sup>58</sup> Mary C. Boys, *Educating in Faith: Maps and Visions* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1989), 94.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 95–96.

<sup>60</sup> Groome, “Toward a Theory/Method of Liberating Catechesis,” 25.

<sup>61</sup> Groome, *Christian Religious Education*, 145–49.

Groome also argues that this approach has been so influential in the twentieth century that “there is evidence in both general and religious education of a major shift toward an active/reflective and relational/experiential way of knowing.”<sup>62</sup> Some leading Catholic religious educators such as Gabriel Moran and James Michael Lee are perceived to be using this experiential approach.<sup>63</sup> In the Protestant religious education tradition, the socialization approach (to which Groome could not fully agree, instead he prefers a dialectical influence between individuals and the community) with some leading figures such as Bushnell, Coe, and Westerhoff III, also being rooted in a relational/ experiential/ reflective way of knowing.<sup>64</sup>

Perceiving that experiential approach to be much more emancipative in comparison to other approaches Groome decided to develop the Shared Christian Praxis Approach for Christian religious education.

e) *Freedom of thoughts in the American Catholic Church context*

Finally, yet importantly is the freedom of thoughts in the American Catholic context, so that Groome can bring his new ideas more freely into a wider discussion. This can be indicated at least from one case that Groome mentioned (originally as an example of the oppressive situation in the Catholic church with its monological communication), i.e. a reasonable modification taken by the dioceses in the United States to change the rule of the First Confession for children by postponing it several years after the First Communion. The postponing, informed by reasonable psychological considerations, was practiced in a majority of the dioceses of the United States for quite a while, before it was eventually condemned by the Magisterium.<sup>65</sup>

Groome’s first theological education was at St. Patrick’s College, Carlow, Ireland. After immigrated to the United States, he received his Master of Arts in Religious Education at Fordham University in 1973, and a Doctorate in Theology and Education from Union Theological Seminary and Columbia University Teachers College, New York, in 1975. He joined Boston College as an assistant professor of theology in 1976; today he is Chairman of the Religious Education and Pastoral Ministry Department and a professor of theology and religious education at Boston College, Massachusetts. It was during the later stages of his education in the United States that Groome started to interact closely with different theological and

---

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 148.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 146.

<sup>64</sup> Boys, *Educating in Faith*, 46–59.

<sup>65</sup> Groome, “Toward a Theory/Method of Liberating Catechesis,” 121.

educational thoughts as well as practices beyond his earlier conservative Roman Catholic tradition.<sup>66</sup>

In conclusion, these are the most significant framework and background which had shaped Groome's thought as he developed his shared praxis approach. It is obvious that his approach to religious education is a response to the oppressive situations that he encountered, from a larger scope to his own specific context: social political, church theology and practice, and church education (catechesis). As a religious educator, he decided to effect a change in his immediate context (the catechesis approach), with the hope that it will bring a significant change towards the larger context in the future generation: to prepare the church with a more appropriate mindset and practice to be an effective agent of liberation for the world.

### Critical Assessments to the Shared Praxis Approach

#### Commendation

Thomas Groome, with his Shared Christian Praxis Approach has contributed significantly to the field of Christian religious education in the past four decades. Horell summarizes Groome's contribution in several areas: as a curriculum developer and teacher, to the development of post-Vatican II Catholic education, to the field of practical theology, and mainly through his seminal work of the Shared Praxis Approach.<sup>67</sup> By revisiting Groome's framework discussed in earlier sections, several aspects of his approach are highlighted in the following section.

#### a) *An Enriched Epistemology*

With the shared praxis approach Groome encourages a learning process beyond a narrow intellectual exercise toward an enriched or "expanded epistemology."<sup>68</sup> Through praxis epistemology he encourages knowing beyond understanding of abstract

---

<sup>66</sup> A fuller account of Groome's academic and ministry background can be found in his online biography (by Horell) published recently at the "Christian Educators of the 20th Century Project" site.

[http://www.talbot.edu/ce20/educators/catholic/thomas\\_groome/](http://www.talbot.edu/ce20/educators/catholic/thomas_groome/)

<sup>67</sup> Harold D. Horell, "Thomas Groome", Talbot School of Theology, Biola University.

[http://www.talbot.edu/ce20/educators/catholic/thomas\\_groome/](http://www.talbot.edu/ce20/educators/catholic/thomas_groome/) (accessed April 1, 2016).

<sup>68</sup> Charter, "Thomas H Groome's Shared Praxis Approach to Ministry," 103.

propositions. Life experiences are rich resources for learning God's truth revealed in the lives of God's people. He argues that the biblical way of knowing from the Hebrew word *yada* refers to an understanding by the heart rather than by the mind, "and the knowing arises not by standing back from in order to look at, but by active and intentional engagement in lived experience."<sup>69</sup> Groome insists that "knowing God in the Hebrew sense arises from lived experience, requiring that the person is possessed by Yahweh, acknowledges in mind and heart God's sovereignty, and lives a response by doing God's will. It is in experience and response that God is truly known."<sup>70</sup>

To establish biblical support from the New Testament Groome cites passages from the fourth Gospel and the first letter of John to show the meaning of knowing God in relation to loving God and obeying his commands, and believing in him. For this, he was considered to be doing exegetical fallacies. He was perceived to be making an appeal to selective evidence while leaving a multitude of other scriptural evidence which show that there is also propositional content to Christian belief. "... by being selective with the evidence, Groome has managed to conclude that Christian belief and knowledge are exclusively experiential and nonintellectual."<sup>71</sup>

However, in reading Groome's more carefully one might question whether he has an intention to negate propositional truth. Rather, what he might suggest is to understand knowing God beyond cognition, not without it. In *Christian Religious Education*, he asserts a relationship between God's revelation and statements of belief. "As Christians have responded to that revelation over the centuries and attempted to live their faith in its light, the meaning they have constructed has come to be a symbolic expression in statements of belief."<sup>72</sup> He also affirms the cognitive dimension of Christian faith "presents religious educators with the task of instructing new members in the doctrinal expression of our faith tradition", and that "because we are rational beings, the instruction needs to be accompanied by an attempt to show the reasonableness of giving assent to such beliefs."<sup>73</sup> In short, through the praxis approach Groome seeks to educate people for conation / wisdom in Christian faith through engaging their whole

---

<sup>69</sup> Groome, *Christian Religious Education*, 141.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 142.

<sup>71</sup> Keith Carson, *The Mission of the Church According to Orlando Costas: A Biblical and Historical Evaluation*, 1984, 54–55; followed by Charter, "Thomas H Groome's Shared Praxis Approach to Ministry," 105.

<sup>72</sup> Groome, *Christian Religious Education*, 74.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 75.

being in the learning process: physical, mental, and volitional,<sup>74</sup> or in other words, their heads, hearts, and hands.<sup>75</sup>

*b) A holistic view between praxis and theory*

The fact that the shared praxis approach starts from participants' present praxis and ends with their commitment for further praxis makes the learning process in religious education personal and relevant for each participant. With the first two and the last two movements, participants are encouraged and facilitated into fully attending to their life journey as they learn particular issues of the Christian Story / Vision according to the generative theme. This is very helpful in avoiding the common practice in the transmission (theory-to-practice) approach which tends to allocate more time and attention to make sure that the intended message is transferred to the participants, leaving a small place for the participants to engage deeply with the Christian Story/Vision being expounded. In extreme cases, the transmission approach in religious education could lead to unintelligent memorizing activities or debating inessential theological issues irrelevant to the daily life of the participants.

On the other hand, it is not a coincidence that the third movement, The Story and Vision of the faith community is placed at the center of the process, in between the present praxis and the commitment for further praxis. Liberation theology, with Gutierrez as one of its major spokesperson - from which Groome has drawn theological insights for his shared praxis approach, perceive Christian theology as a dialectic between the Bible and Latin American life contexts. However, liberation theology has received many critiques for its hermeneutical methods including its tendency to put more weight to the present praxis and critical ideologies over the Scripture, and its selectivity to certain biblical passages (such as Exodus, Isaiah 48-55, Amos, Daniel, Matthew 5-7, and Revelation).<sup>76</sup>

Unlike the hermeneutical approach of the liberation theology, Groome indicates his high degree of respect to the accumulated wisdom of the faith community over many centuries by placing the Christian Story and Vision in the center of his approach and in a deeper level of conversation with the present participants' stories and vision. With his shared praxis approach Groome has helped to bridge the gap

---

<sup>74</sup> Groome, *Sharing Faith*.

<sup>75</sup> Groome, *Will There Be Faith?: A New Vision for Educating and Growing Disciples*.

<sup>76</sup> Thiselton, *Hermeneutics*; see also Emilio Antonio Nunez C., *Liberation Theology* (Moody Press, 1985); David K. Clark, *To Know and Love God: Method for Theology* (Crossway Books, 2003).

between theory and practice, by placing them in a deep conversation with one another, rather than having one over the other. In this way, both orthodoxy and orthopraxy are to be taken seriously.

To a certain extent, this holistic approach might be seen as an expression of Groome's intention to bring together two dominant approaches to religious education which were parallel movements in Catholic (kerygmatic and experiential) and Protestant (deductive and inductive, the Bible – “sound doctrine” and human experience - concern) contexts. Even though the shared praxis approach can be viewed as an experiential approach, Groome was careful to develop a synthesis from both dominant perspectives, in the five movements that he developed. In Groome's own words “I understand the life to Faith to life approach as bringing together both kerygmatic and experiential catechesis, both religious education and Christian education. It is inductive in that it engages people to reflect on their own lives and deductive in that it is committed to thorough instruction in Christian Faith.”<sup>77</sup>

With particular notes on certain issues addressed later, Groome's SCPA can be appreciated as an excellent synthesis of the two dominant approaches in religious education in the twentieth century.

c) *A significant contribution to practical theology*

Groome's SCPA has a strong potentiality to facilitate theological reflections on daily life issues, which unfortunately were often neglected in classical theological discourses. For more mature participants, a generative theme would enable participants to attend to issues in their family, work, or social lives, which are meaningful for them. In fact, the whole movements that facilitate a critical, yet creative interaction between the present praxis of the participants and pertaining theological reflections accumulated in the faith tradition has made it possible for Groome's approach to contribute significantly to the development of practical theology. It is not surprising that Groome's essential contribution to practical theology, through his shared praxis approach has been well recognized by those who are in

---

<sup>77</sup> Groome's concern and efforts to develop a synthesis in the midst of the deep division between the two dominant approaches to religious education in the middle of the twentieth century is also reflected in the title of his first book: *Christian Religious Education*, bringing together the two common terms “Christian Education” and “Religious Education” (see Horell's online biography of Thomas Groome).

this field.<sup>78</sup> James H. Brandt, a historical theologian, contends that the publication of Groome's *Sharing Faith* (1991) and Don Browning's (1982) *A Fundamental Practical Theology* as "an important moment in the rebirth and re-orientation of practical theology in both Protestant and Catholic circles."<sup>79</sup>

For most of the twentieth century, practical theology was understood as an application of theological (theoretical) truths emerging from biblical, historical and systematic theology to practical disciplines such as preaching, worship, care giving, education, administration, and social ministry. This means that present practices and practical theology were not expected to contribute significantly to the theological discourses. However, according to Brandt, the two works "focused the stirrings of the previous 20 years and articulated a vision of practical theology as a critical and creative endeavor, integrating theory and practice and moving beyond notions of application"<sup>80</sup>

### Critique

Having explored some of Groome's significant contributions through his shared praxis approach, further exploration of possible shortcomings in this approach are warranted, with the intention to envision a more fruitful result in Christian religious education. Horell summarizes critiques toward Groome's work into four groups: 1) Groome's underlying educational and theological anthropology, such as "a lack in substantive discussions of the ways culture, race, gender, and class shape human life", and also that he is "overly optimistic about human nature"; 2) His approach is too theological and "does not attend carefully enough to the educational nature and dynamics of education in faith"; 3) The theological underpinning of his approach; and 4) His attempts to develop a comprehensive approach to religious education in a post modern age.<sup>81</sup>

---

<sup>78</sup> Horell, "Thomas Groome," Talbot School of Theology, Biola University. [http://www.talbot.edu/ce20/educators/catholic/thomas\\_groome/](http://www.talbot.edu/ce20/educators/catholic/thomas_groome/) (accessed April 1, 2016).

<sup>79</sup> James Brandt, "Historical Theology," in Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore, *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Practical Theology* (John Wiley & Sons, 2011), 367.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Harold D. Horell, "Thomas Groome", Talbot School of Theology, Biola University. [http://www.talbot.edu/ce20/educators/catholic/thomas\\_groome/](http://www.talbot.edu/ce20/educators/catholic/thomas_groome/) (accessed April 1, 2016).

These critiques may not agree with each other, since they come from diverse directions. Based on my own reading of Groome's works, several issues will be further explored, whether they are related directly or indirectly with those listed by Horell.

a) *Overemphasis on freedom as the purpose of Christian religious education*

As noted in the earlier section, the motif of freedom is central in Groome's educational approach. Largely, this might be influenced by his own background (personal, ecclesial, and social), and also by the theologians, educators, and philosophers from whom he drew insights for his shared praxis approach (such as Gutierrez, Freire, and Habermas). Other than his choosing of praxis as a way of knowing, the motif of liberation/emancipation/freedom can be seen in the way Groome outlines the purpose of Christian religious education. He insists that human freedom, together with Christian faith (i.e. believing, trusting, and doing), are the twin immediate purposes of the ultimate purpose to lead people toward the kingdom of God.

In Groome's framework, human freedom has more than one dimension. However, it is clear from his writings that more emphasis is given to the social and political freedom. "Thus the freedom made possible by Jesus Christ is social and political freedom as well as spiritual and psychological one. His dying and rising is a means of grace to empower the human struggle within history for an ever increasing degree of freedom from sin as it is embodied in the economic, political, and cultural arrangements of our world."<sup>82</sup> He also maintains "educating for Christian faith is consistently an education for human freedom."<sup>83</sup>

Poverty, injustice and oppression are widespread problems in the world, which Christians cannot take lightly if they want to be faithful to biblical teaching. Therefore, solidarity with the poor and the oppressed is essential. The question is: How comprehensive is human freedom/liberation to be placed beside Christian faith as the biblical purpose of human living? The comprehensiveness of the purpose of Christian religious education is important, if this approach is to be applied to Christian religious education in various contexts and is intended to help Christians to fulfill the biblical task of their humanity as God's image bearer. Are we to understand that obtaining freedom is the whole answer to this essential question?

An evolution in Groome's thought in formulating freedom (beside Christian faith) as the purpose of Christian religious education

---

<sup>82</sup> Groome, *Christian Religious Education*, 97.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 99.

could be an indication that this might not be the case. In his earlier works, Groome was more straightforward in speaking about “freedom from”, with more emphasis on the sociopolitical/structural dimension.<sup>84</sup> In his later works, he seems to try to be more comprehensive in defining the purpose of Christian religious education by expanding the meaning of freedom.<sup>85</sup> In *Sharing Faith*, he defines freedom as the purpose of Christian religious education not only as “freedom from” (which is grammatically more natural), but also expands it to “freedom for” and “freedom to”. Freedom as defined in *Sharing Faith* includes “free from sin, personal and social, calls them to struggle against the consequences of sinful choices and structures”, and also expands the meaning of freedom to include “to be free for living in right relationship with God, self, others, and creation and free to create structural arrangements that enable others to so live.”<sup>86</sup>

This later expansion of the meaning of freedom indicates that freedom (in a natural sense of meaning) is not sufficient to become a comprehensive purpose for Christian religious education. Freedom (in a holistic understanding that includes spiritual, psychological, and sociopolitical dimensions) is a crucial intermediary state to live according to God’s original design for human lives, but it is not the end. Freedom can be abused (see for example Paul’s warning in Gal 5:13). The oppressed can become the oppressor.<sup>87</sup>

More importantly, Groome’s description of “freedom for” (the expanded meaning of freedom) is very much similar to the biblical understanding of shalom. See for example, Wolterstoff description of biblical shalom: “Shalom is harmony and delight in all one’s relationships – with God, with other human beings, with culture, with nature, with oneself.”<sup>88</sup> Wolterstoff himself points to shalom, or human flourishing, as an overarching purpose of education from Christian perspective. This purpose, he suggests, has two dimensions: the task of development and the task of healing.<sup>89</sup> This idea is unpacked further in his other writing, *Teaching for Shalom*: “The vision of shalom comes to us, for one thing, as a two-part command: We are to pray and struggle for the release of the captives, and we are to pray and

---

<sup>84</sup> Groome, “Toward a Theory/Method of Liberating Catechesis”; Groome, *Christian Religious Education*.

<sup>85</sup> Groome, *Sharing Faith*; Groome, *Will There Be Faith?: A New Vision for Educating and Growing Disciples*.

<sup>86</sup> Groome, *Sharing Faith*, 24.

<sup>87</sup> Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Seabury Press, 1973).

<sup>88</sup> Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Educating for Life: Reflections on Christian Teaching and Learning* (Baker Academic, 2002), 262.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 253–64.

struggle for the release of the enriching potentials of God's creation. We live under both a liberation mandate and a cultural mandate. And the vision comes to us as a two-part invitation: We are invited to celebrate such manifestations of shalom as appear in our world, and invited to mourn shalom's shortfall."<sup>90</sup>

Wolterstoff's definition of the ultimate purpose of education from the Christian perspective, i.e. shalom, is more or less similar with Groome's definition of the ultimate purpose of Christian religious education, i.e. the reign of God. As Plantinga Jr. has put it correctly "In fact, 'the coming kingdom of God' is just the NT way of spelling shalom."<sup>91</sup> However, they translate it differently. While Wolterstoff translates it into the task of development and the task of healing, Groome translates it into Christian faith and human freedom.

Wolterstoff's description of the healing task or liberation mandate bears a lot of similarities with Groome's description of human freedom as the purpose of Christian religious education. However, the area of cultural development task is missing from Groome's purpose. This is unfortunate. This means that the proportion of our basic human task, as God's image bearers (Gen 1:26-28), which also needs guidance from the Story/Vision is neglected from the Christian religious education agenda. To be meaningful and true to real daily life of a huge number of people who live with the mundane task of life such as children upbringing or ordinary administrative/technical works, religious education needs to provide meaning beyond all kinds of sacred-secular dualism and social activism.<sup>92</sup> Therefore, it is crucial that Christian religious education has a comprehensive purpose, which is true to our basic humanity, and prepare us to fulfill our calling both as culture makers and wound healers/liberators. This means that readiness to fulfill one's cultural calling is not supposed to be left out in constructing the purpose of Christian religious education. Instead of stretching out the word "freedom" beyond its natural meaning, adding the third dimension of cultural development task, besides Christian faith and human freedom, as the immediate purposes of

---

<sup>90</sup> Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Educating for Shalom: Essays on Christian Higher Education* (W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2004), 23.

<sup>91</sup> Similar to Wolterstoff, Cornelius Plantinga Jr. (2002), in *Engaging God's World: A Christian Vision of Faith, Learning, and Living* argues that education from a Christian perspective, is to prepare God's people for service in God's kingdom, for universal flourishing

<sup>92</sup> For further exploration on a more holistic framework of human cultural calling, see for example Andy Crouch's (2009) *Culture Making: Recovering Our Creative Calling*, or Paul Stevens' (1999) *The Other Six Days: Vocation, Work, and Ministry in Biblical Perspective*

Christian religious education will most likely make the present construct more comprehensive.

*b) A formalized structure to the possibility of challenge toward the constitutive elements of faith tradition*

As it has been discussed earlier (in the Dialectical Hermeneutic subsection), Groome's definition of the Christian Story (in movement 3) and the second half of his dialectical hermeneutic approach from the present praxis to the Story/Vision (in movement 4) has stirred concerns of the impact of this approach toward the constitutive element(s) of the Story/Vision, such as on the authority of the Scripture.<sup>93</sup>

Groome describes the Christian Story in movement 3 as "a metaphor for the whole faith life and practical wisdom of the Christian community that is congealed in its Scriptures, symbols, myths, rituals, liturgies, creeds, dogmas, doctrines, theologies, practices, spiritualities, expected life-styles, values, arts, artifacts, structures, and so on."<sup>94</sup> It would be hard to deny that given this definition there is no clear hierarchy or boundary markers between what is constitutive to the Christian Story and what are not. The authoritative position of the Scripture as the "measure rod" for ethical and doctrinal content of the Christian faith is not clearly reflected in Groome's definition of the Story.<sup>95</sup> These boundary markers are even more important since movement 4 allows not only affirmation, but also refusal or questioning of the Christian Story/Vision, based on the present praxis of the participants.

Groome anticipates this former happening. "Some rejection, however, can be of something truly constitutive of the tradition, and the "open" and dialectical dynamics of movement 4 of shared praxis formalizes that possibility."<sup>96</sup> However, even with the possibility that he has anticipated, Groome does not intend to put an explicit boundary marker between the constitutive and non-constitutive Story/Vision in the Shared Christian Praxis movements.

In *Will There be Faith?*, published thirty years after his last major academic work, *Sharing Faith*, Groome seems to shift to a more conservative stance in his approach. This is indicated in several ways. First, an increased emphasis on "persuasion" in presenting the

---

<sup>93</sup> Charter, "Thomas H Groome's Shared Praxis Approach to Ministry," 107-9.

<sup>94</sup> Groome, *Sharing Faith*, 114.

<sup>95</sup> D. A Carson and John D Woodbridge, *Hermeneutics, Authority, and Canon* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2005), 300.

<sup>96</sup> Groome, *Sharing Faith*, 260.

Christian Story/Vision (a tone which never appeared in his previous works) is indicated in the frequent occurrence of the phrase “meaning and persuasion” throughout the book.<sup>97</sup> Second, in contrast to the several explicit mention and explanation of two-way hermeneutics in the *Sharing Faith*, the emphasis of movement 4 in the *WTF* seems to shift to the first half of the dialectical hermeneutic. Third, his strong statements on the normative nature of the Scripture and Tradition (which is at the same level of authority in Catholic context), such as “God’s revelation through Scripture and Tradition is complete in that we await no further normative revelation, and what is already revealed can never be withdrawn.”<sup>98</sup>

However, since the basic construct of the movements are still the same, this means that the shared praxis approach still has a potential problem of the possible refusal to what is constitutive in the faith tradition in the learning process. Therefore, either adjustments to the construct of the movements or precautions for educators who guide the learning process need to be made, so that this potential problem is solved or anticipated when this approach is used.

c) *The potentially dominant role of the educator in presenting the Story/Vision*

It is Groome’s deepest intention to promote an emancipative approach to religious education. As explored in the earlier section, shared praxis approach is outstanding for this purpose, particularly with his praxis way of knowing and the dual hermeneutic that even allowing participants to refuse or move beyond the Christian Story / Vision.

However, how emancipative is the third movement? According to Groome, “The educator’s activity in movement 3 is essentially a hermeneutical one: she or he interprets and explains the aspects of Christian community Story/Vision as appropriate to the generative theme(s) or symbols(s) of the occasion and in dialogue with the stories/visions of participants.”<sup>99</sup> Note that the subject who “interprets” here is the educator, not the participants; and subsequently the participants receive what the educator “explains” from the Story/Vision, which has been digested by the educator.

While this observation might be considered as an exaggeration, the language that Groome uses to explain movement 3 in *Will There be Faith?* is even stronger. The emphasis on presenting the story with “meaning and persuasion,” as indicated by the frequent repetition of

---

<sup>97</sup> Astley and Bowman, “Will There Be Faith?”

<sup>98</sup> Groome, *Will There Be Faith?: A New Vision for Educating and Growing Disciples*, 285.

<sup>99</sup> Groome, *Sharing Faith*, 223.

this phrase, suggests a dominant role for the educator in interpreting and explaining the meaning of the Story/Vision addressed.

Perhaps this approach is fit for those who are in the early years of their faith (physically or in their faith commitment). However, if the shared praxis approach is going to be used for those who are more mature (in their age or in their faith commitment) then andragogical principles<sup>100</sup> need to be taken into account. More mature (particularly in their faith commitment) participants come to the learning table with more understanding of the faith tradition and readiness to participate actively. Hence, the learning process would be even more fruitful with their active participation in accessing the Story/Vision.

One way to do this is through what is called as Inductive Bible Study (IBS), a learning method which has been widely used both by individuals and in group settings.<sup>101</sup> IBS focuses on searching the meaning of the Scripture as intended by its biblical authors. This intended meaning refers to what is called “critical realism” i.e. “the belief that there is something real in the text to be discovered, and that it must be ascertained via ‘critical’ research,” as opposed to positivism or “naïve realism” (what we have is a definite or objective knowledge) and the pessimistic view of subjectivism or “phenomenalism” (final knowledge is inaccessible).<sup>102</sup> This concern leads to studying the basic literary units of the text within their historical and literary contexts. With certain Scripture passages to learn (e.g. a pericope or a chapter), there are three basic steps in this method: Observation (of the text within its context), Interpretation (to get the principle/meaning of the

---

<sup>100</sup> Malcolm S. Knowles, Elwood F. Holton, and Richard A. Swanson, *The Adult Learner: The Definitive Classic in Adult Education and Human Resource Development*, 7th ed. (London: Routledge, 2012), 63–67.

<sup>101</sup> According to Bauer & Traina (2011), although the origin of IBS in the narrow sense is associated with the founding of The Biblical Seminary in 1900, “this approach had precursors in the history of interpretation and has, since the beginning of the twentieth century enjoyed widespread dissemination” (2011, 2). Over the years it has been part of the instruction in some theological seminaries in North America. “IBS is probably best known, however, in its lay-oriented forms. For example, it has become central in the discipleship development program of InterVarsity Christian Fellowship; and it has been introduced to millions through the writings of popular authors” (2011, 2). In fact, campus ministries worldwide with similar international affiliation with InterVarsity, including in Indonesia, are among those who have benefited from this approach for decades.

<sup>102</sup> Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, Revised and Expanded edition (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2007), 512.

text beyond the boundaries of time and space), and Application (of the principle into the participants' lives today).<sup>103</sup>

Using IBS in small group settings, the group leader can naturally choose the role of a facilitator of discussion, instead of as a lecturer. On the other hand, participants or group members can participate actively throughout the learning process. They benefit from the firsthand study of the text, using background information and other secondary resources. Not surprisingly, this method has been proven to be fruitful in various contexts for decades. In the long run, those who are trained with this method and keep practicing it tend to develop more critical understandings when they read the Scripture or listen to someone else interpretation of the text.

Since there is no one perfect method, without proper facilitation, a group using IBS could spend most of their time on Observation and Interpretation, leaving little time to deeply think and discuss the Application part; or Application may fall into the "how to" without in depth personal engagement with the expounded upon biblical truth. In this matter, Groome's shared praxis approach is excellent with its emphasis on critical reflection to the present praxis and its dual hermeneutic that naturally leads participants to engage with the biblical Story on a deeper level, before turning to any commitment for application/praxis.

From this brief comparison, it has become apparent that both shared praxis approach and IBS have their own strengths and weaknesses. They also have some fundamental differences. While IBS is rooted in the traditional hermeneutics (with its emphasis on the text in relation to the intended meaning of the author), the shared praxis approach is rooted in the newer hermeneutics (with its emphasis on the text in relation to the reader).<sup>104</sup> While "text" in IBS refers exclusively to the Old and New Testament text, "text" in the shared praxis approach also includes a variety of faith tradition.<sup>105</sup> However, as noted earlier, they seem to be complementary with each other in some ways. Therefore, a creative combination/reconstruction of the shared praxis approach with other approaches/methods such as the Inductive Bible Study seems to be promising for a more fruitful Christian religious education. It would be worth to be explored further.

---

<sup>103</sup> For further exploration of this method, see Kuhatschek's (1996) *Applying the Bible*; or Bauer & Traina's (2011) *Inductive Bible Study: A Comprehensive Guide to the Practice of Hermeneutics*.

<sup>104</sup> See Thiselton, *Hermeneutics*, 17–34.

<sup>105</sup> Groome, *Sharing Faith*, 114.

d) *Beyond a rational shared Christian praxis approach*

Following a critique regarding the lack of comprehensiveness of his purpose of Christian religious education in earlier section, another critical assessment will be presented toward the comprehensiveness of his approach. Some religious educators question the place of liturgy in Groome's educational approach.<sup>106</sup> This is a valid question. Looking at the history of Christian education over many centuries, perhaps the question needs to be stretched further, to include the role of music, visual arts, drama, movies, etc.

Although Groome has argued almost convincingly that the shared praxis approach engages people's whole being – body, mind, and will; cognitive, affective, and behavioral- as agent-subjects-in relationship,<sup>107</sup> the rational element is still a dominant way of knowing in his approach. This is quite obvious when his approach is compared to transformative learning theory, which bears some similarities in that it employs critical reflection, along with verbal discourses, as its main components.<sup>108</sup>

Transformative learning theory, as it was posited by its initial architect, Jack Mezirow, refers to a perspective transformation through critical reflection.<sup>109</sup> One major critique of Jack Mezirow is that his approach is too driven by rationality, without sufficient attention to other forms of knowing such as through emotions and embodied forms of knowing.<sup>110</sup>

In the past few decades, transformative learning theory has continued to develop and become a major voice in the field of adult

---

<sup>106</sup> Harold D. Horell, "Thomas Groome", Talbot School of Theology, Biola University.  
[http://www.talbot.edu/ce20/educators/catholic/thomas\\_groome/](http://www.talbot.edu/ce20/educators/catholic/thomas_groome/) (accessed April 1, 2016).

<sup>107</sup> Groome, *Sharing Faith*, 85–132.

<sup>108</sup> A description of critical reflection used in the transformative learning theory indicates that it has the same roots with Groome's. In *Critical Reflection and Transformative Learning*, Carolin Kreber writes "... an important feature that distinguishes critical reflection from these other constructs is its strong foundation in critical theory (for example, Freire, 1970; Habermas, 1971, 1983; Gramsci, 1971)" (Taylor and Cranton, eds., *The Handbook of Transformative Learning* 2012, 324).

<sup>109</sup> Jack Mezirow defines Transformative Learning as "the process by which we transform our taken-for-granted frames of reference (meaning perspectives, habits of mind, mind-sets) to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, emotionally capable of change, and reflective so that they may generate beliefs and opinions that will prove more true or justified to guide action" (2012, 76)

<sup>110</sup> Edward W. Taylor and Patricia Cranton, eds., *The Handbook of Transformative Learning: Theory, Research, and Practice*, 1st edition (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2012), 23.

learning. Along with this development, transformative learning theory has expanded from what was originally only a rational learning process to include what is called the “extra rational” learning.<sup>111</sup> This includes the role of imagination, intuition, “soul work”, and emotion, in the process of meaning-making through various forms such as visual arts, music, poetry, dance, drama, storytelling, fiction, film, and creative writing.<sup>112</sup>

Mezirow, in one of his recent works indicates his recognition of this expansion. He states that learning, “may be intentional, the result of deliberate inquiry; incidental, a by-product of another activity involving intentional learning; or mindlessly assimilative.”<sup>113</sup> Other than the first two types of learning (intentional and incidental) that involve the use of verbal language to articulate our experience, he also recognizes a third type, which is called presentational. “In presentational construal we do not require words to make meaning, as when we experience presence, motion, color, texture, directionality, aesthetic or kinesthetic experience, empathy, feelings, appreciation, inspiration, or transcendence.”<sup>114</sup>

Among others, art works in the learning process, for example, can help us to connect with our emotions and imaginations “they can take us out of our heads and into our bodies, hearts, and souls in ways that allow us to connect more deeply with self and others.”<sup>115</sup> Art works can also be so evocative to our emotions and imagination because they enable the audience to vicariously participate in the experience, surfacing our unconscious awareness, enabling us to look from other perspective(s), and breaking the boundaries that constrain us.<sup>116</sup>

In regards to embodied forms of knowing, recent Christian educators also speaks about the importance of what is called “hidden curriculum” and various church functions (*koinonia* - fellowship, *kerygma* - preaching, *propheteia* - advocacy, *diakonia* - ministry, and *leitourgia* - worship) in Christian formation.<sup>117</sup> More importantly, biblical testimonies also refers to the importance of this “extra-rational” aspects referring to a more holistic approach in Christian

---

<sup>111</sup> Sharan B. Merriam and Bieremma, *Adult Learning: Linking Theory and Practice*, 2014.

<sup>112</sup> Taylor and Cranton, *The Handbook of Transformative Learning*.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 75.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 471.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., 471–85.

<sup>117</sup> Robert W. Pazmiño, *Foundational Issues in Christian Education: An Introduction in Evangelical Perspective*, 3rd edition (Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Academic, 2008).

formation. See for example 2 Tim 3:10-11 and 1 Thes 2: 1-12. These passages invite their original audience to engage in a critical reflection. However, the content indicates that their personal encounter and shared experiences with Paul have been very crucial for their Christian formation. These experiences were not less important than his verbal teaching.

With this brief exploration to some educational theories, it is apparent that Groome's educational approach needs to be situated in a larger picture of other ways of knowing and learning approaches. Excellent as it is, his educational approach is not an exhaustive approach. For a more fruitful Christian formation, his approach should be used along with other helpful approaches in Christian religious education. For a fruitful Christian formation, the role of the educator and the faith community as a model of embodied Christian Story/Vision in daily life, is not less important than the intentional five movements learning process.

### **Conclusion**

Groome's shared Christian praxis approach is the fruit of a genius effort to draw theological, philosophical, and pedagogical insights from various, sometimes opposite, resources, and blend them together to provide a rich approach in Christian religious education. His approach can be understood better by exploring the theological and the philosophical frameworks behind it, and the influences on Groome given his historical background, which shaped his thoughts and to which he reacted.

Among his significant contributions to be commended, three of them have been highlighted in this article: 1) an enriched epistemology with the praxis way of knowing employed in Christian religious education; 2) a balance/holistic approach between theory and praxis, between the faith tradition Story/Vision and the participant's stories and vision; and 3) his contribution to practical theology through educational approach.

However, no theory, including the shared Christian praxis approach, is perfect or can stand alone. A critical assessment of this approach suggests some ways to make it more fruitful when applied in Christian religious education, such as: 1) the need to set a more comprehensive purpose of Christian religious education beyond human freedom, such as educating for shalom or human flourishing;

2) the need to put a clearer boundary marker between the constitutive and non constitutive components of the Story/Vision; and 3) creative combinations with other educational approaches, in recognition of the limitation of this approach such as in its less emancipative element in the third movement and its highly rational approach. Further explorations need to be conducted if the shared Christian praxis approach is expected to be more fruitful for Christian religious education.

### About the Author

Sutrisna Harjanto is the professor of educational studies at Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Bandung. He received his Ph.D. from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, IL.

### Bibliography

- Astley, Jeff, and Lorna Bowman. "Will There Be Faith? Depends on Every Christian." *Journal of Adult Theological Education* 9, no. 1 (June 2012): 94–99.
- Bauer, David R., Robert A. Traina, and Eugene Peterson. *Inductive Bible Study: A Comprehensive Guide to the Practice of Hermeneutics*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014.
- Beaudoin, Tom. "The Theological Anthropology of Thomas Groome." *Religious Education* 100, no. 2 (2005): 127–38.
- Boys, Mary C. *Educating in Faith: Maps and Visions*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1989.
- Brocious, Robert Alan. "Thomas Groome's 'Shared Christian Praxis': An Alternative Paradigm for Southern Baptist Theological Education," 1991.
- Brown, Robert McAfee. *Gustavo Gutiérrez: An Introduction to Liberation Theology*. New York: Orbis Books, 1990.
- Bruce, F. F. *The Canon of Scripture*. Downers Grove, Ill: IVP Academic, 1988.
- Carson, D. A. *Exegetical Fallacies*. Grand Rapids: MI: Paternoster, 1996.
- Carson, D. A, and John D Woodbridge. *Hermeneutics, Authority, and Canon*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2005.
- . *Hermeneutics, Authority, and Canon*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2005.

- Charter, Miriam. "Thomas H Groome's Shared Praxis Approach to Ministry: Questioning Its Application in the Protestant Evangelical Church." *Trinity Journal* 15, no. 1 (1994): 89–113.
- Clark, David K. *To Know and Love God: Method for Theology*. Crossway Books, 2003.
- Clement, Neville. "Thomas Groome and the Intersection of Narrative and Action: Praxis, Dialectic and Hermeneutics." *Australian EJournal of Theology* 10 (2007). Accessed April 1, 2016.  
[http://aejt.com.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0007/378106/AEJT\\_10.6\\_Clement\\_Thomas\\_Groome.pdf](http://aejt.com.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/378106/AEJT_10.6_Clement_Thomas_Groome.pdf).
- "Creating a Legacy of Inductive Bible Study." Accessed April 14, 2016. <https://www.ivpress.com/title/ata/3105-press.pdf>.
- Crouch, Andy. *Culture Making: Recovering Our Creative Calling*. IVP Books, 2008.
- Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Seabury Press, 1970.
- Groome, Thomas. *Will There Be Faith?: A New Vision for Educating and Growing Disciples*. New York, NY: HarperOne, 2011.
- Groome, Thomas H. *Christian Religious Education : Sharing Our Story and Vision*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1980.
- . "From Life to Faith to Life: Some Traces." *Journal of Adult Theological Education* 8, no. 1 (June 2011): 8–23.  
doi:10.1558/JATE.v8i1.8.
- . *Sharing Faith : A Comprehensive Approach to Religious Education and Pastoral Ministry : The Way of Shared Praxis*. San Francisco: Harper, 1991.
- . "Toward a Theory/Method of Liberating Catechesis." Columbia University, 1975.
- Horell, Harold D, "Thomas Groome." Talbot School of Theology, Biola University.  
[http://www.talbot.edu/ce20/educators/catholic/thomas\\_groome/](http://www.talbot.edu/ce20/educators/catholic/thomas_groome/)  
 (accessed April 1, 2016).
- Knowles, Malcolm S. *The Adult Learner: The Definitive Classic in Adult Education and Human Resource Development*. 7th ed. Oxford : Butterworth-Heinemann, 2012.
- Kuhatschek, Jack. *Applying the Bible*. Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan, 1996.
- Kurian, George Thomas, and Mark A. Lamport, eds. *Encyclopedia of Christian Education*. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015.
- Meek, Esther L. *Loving to Know: Introducing Covenant Epistemology*. Eugene: OR: Cascade Books, 2011.

- Merriam, Sharan B and Laura Bierema. *Adult Learning: Linking Theory and Practice*, 2014.
- Miller, Rebecca. "LibGuides: Roling Library: Home." Accessed April 12, 2016. <http://library.tiu.edu/home>.
- Miller-McLemore, Bonnie J. *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Practical Theology*. John Wiley & Sons, 2011.
- Hastings, Adrian. *Modern Catholicism: Vatican II and After*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1991.
- Moran, Gabriel. *The Present Revelation: The Search for Religious Foundations*. New York,; Herder and Herder, 1972.
- Nunez C., Emilio Antonio. *Liberation Theology*. Moody Press, 1985.
- Osborne, Grant R. *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*. Revised and Expanded edition. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2007.
- Paprocki, Joe. "Where Have You Gone, Thomas Groome? The Role of Experience in Catechesis." *Catechist's Journey*, October 24, 2012.  
<http://catechistsjourney.loyolapress.com/2012/10/where-have-you-gone-thomas-groome-the-role-of-experience-in-catechesis/>.
- Pazmiño, Robert W. *Foundational Issues in Christian Education: An Introduction in Evangelical Perspective*. Baker Academic, 2008.
- Plantinga, Cornelius. *Engaging God's World: A Christian Vision of Faith, Learning, and Living*. W.B. Eerdmans, 2002.
- Rowland, Christopher, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Liberation Theology*. Cambridge Companions to Religion. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.
- Schoof, T. M. *A Survey of Catholic Theology, 1800-1970*. Glen Rock: NJ: Paulist Newman Press, 1970.
- Smallbones, Jacqueline L. "Implications of Thomas Henry Groome's Shared Christian Praxis for Evangelical Christian Education." Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 1983.
- Stevens, R. Paul. *The Other Six Days: Vocation, Work, and Ministry in Biblical Perspective*. W.B. Eerdmans, 2000.
- Taylor, Edward W., and Patricia Cranton. *The Handbook of Transformative Learning: Theory, Research, and Practice*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2012.
- Thiselton, Anthony C. *Hermeneutics: An Introduction*. Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2009.
- Wagner, Mervyn Arthur. "Thomas Groome's Educational Thinking: An Evaluation from Lutheran Perspectives." Concordia College, 1986.

- Wolterstorff, Nicholas. *Educating for Life: Reflections on Christian Teaching and Learning*. Baker Academic, 2002.
- . *Educating for Shalom: Essays on Christian Higher Education*. W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2004.
- Woodbridge, Noel B. “Review of Thomas Groome, *Sharing Faith: The Way of Shared Praxis*.” *Conspectus (South African Theological Seminary)* 10 (September 2010): 114–32.